Remarks to Goddard Space Flight Center Employees in Greenbelt, Maryland

June 1, 1992

Thank you very, very much. Thank you for this welcome to Goddard. And Dan Goldin, thank you, sir, for the introduction, the leadership you're giving the Agency. With me is Bill Reilly. We've been talking today about the upcoming summit in Brazil, the environmental meeting down there. And this visit is very timely for both of us, I think, seeing what magnificent contribution Goddard makes to a better understanding of our planet. I want to salute Mike Deland, who was with us up at Camp David a little bit ago. He runs our Council on Environmental Quality. He's at my side in the White House, a sound environmentalist. Dr. Klineberg, I listened, I had the applause meter on when you walked in, and either they're scared of you or you're doing something right. [*Laughter*] I don't know which it is, but it was most impressive. And thanks for your hospitality. May I salute Brian Dailey, out here, of the Space Council. And I'd like to thank Dr. Fisk, who helped us in the tour.

Now, you know that it's been a month, and in just over a month on the job, Dan Goldin supervised the recovery of a satellite on *Endeavor*'s maiden voyage; he won a vote, a very important vote, to save the space station on the floor of the House; and he launched his own cultural revolution at NASA. And I'd say the new NASA is off to a flying start. And I am very grateful to him for taking on this terribly important assignment heading up NASA.

Twenty years ago this month, 20 years ago, the leaders of the world gathered in Sweden to talk about the human environment. The Stockholm Declaration that they adopted had a simple conclusion, that through fuller knowledge and wiser action we can achieve for ourselves and our posterity a better life in an environment more in keeping with human needs and hopes. Much has been accomplished since those early days of environmentalism, and much has been learned.

We've learned that only market-oriented economies and democratic systems provide the accountability needed to protect against environmental degradation. The coating of soot that the world found when the curtain of secrecy was pulled back from Eastern Europe was but one visible demonstration of that.

We've learned that the economy can grow even while pollution is reduced. Since 1973, our GDP has grown by more than 50 percent. And yet air quality has gotten better: Emissions of carbon monoxide and smog-forming ozone, sulfur dioxide, and particulate matter are all down by more than 20 percent. And water quality has gotten better: We've achieved an 80 percent reduction in suspended solids from industrial and sewage treatment plants.

We've learned that technology, spurred by the right incentives, can provide help to the environment that no amount of regulation of old technology could have achieved. Technological progress can cut pollution rather than increase it. And at the same time, the efficiency gained is good for profits.

And we've learned that market-based mechanisms and flexibility, aimed at ambitious objectives and backed up by rigorous enforcement, can help us solve environmental problems at less cost than command-and-control regulation.

We've learned about a new generation of environmental problems that are global in scope and that will require international cooperation to solve. This week, and I referred to this earlier, over 100 heads of state will gather in Rio de Janeiro, and it will be time to apply those lessons. And what better place to discuss our plans for taking on the problems of the international environment than here at Goddard.

I thought as I was on this little tour, which was all too quick but nevertheless gave me a little feel about the magnificent work that the wonderful employees of Goddard do, I thought wouldn't it be a wonderful thing if these 100 or more heads of state

could actually walk through the laboratories here and get a practical feeling for what it is you are doing, to see how they can better monitor the changes that they talk about or that they get from their environmental ministers. It's a wonderful thing. And I think it's very timely that I've had this opportunity, and I look forward to sharing it with those people down in Rio.

It is science developed here that has given the world a new window from which to see its environment. A spacecraft managed by Goddard provided humanity with its first image of Earth from space. It was your scientists, Goddard's scientists, who developed the upper atmosphere research satellite launched last year, which is providing us new insight about the content of the ozone layer. And the lion's share of the science that the world is using to understand our climate comes from a program with its heart and soul right here, the Global Change Research Program, built around the Mission to Planet Earth that Goddard is developing.

When we go to Rio, the U.S. will go proudly as the world's leader, not just in environmental research but in environmental action. The United States was the first nation to recognize the danger of CFC emissions by eliminating aerosol propellants, which we did in 1978. Other nations are now following suit using the aerosol phaseout as credit to meet the terms of the Montreal Protocol. We are 42 percent ahead of the schedule required by that agreement. And earlier this year, on the basis of science developed by NASA, we unilaterally decided to speed up our timetable for phasing out CFC's to the end of 1995. We were the first nation, back in 1975, to adopt catalytic converters to reduce those emissions from our cars and trucks. In 1982, we began phasing out lead from American gasoline, and now ambient levels of lead in our air have been cut by 95 percent. Other nations are only now taking these two steps.

I came to this office committed to extend America's record of environmental leadership. And I've worked to do so in a way that is compatible with economic growth because this balance is absolutely essential and because these are twin goals, not mutually exclusive objectives. You see, those who met 20 years ago at Stockholm and called for this UNCED, this summit, explicitly called for the discussion at Rio to be about both environment and development. And they knew even back then that the two were inextricably linked. Only a growing economy can generate the resources and the will to manage natural assets for the longer term and the common good. But only assets which are so managed can support the growth on which so much human hope is hinged. By definition, for development to be successful in the long term, it has got to be sustainable. And so, I invite comparison of the record that we as a country and as an administration have built. It is aggressive. It is comprehensive. And it is ambitious, but carefully balanced. What we've done in this administration reflects the new environmentalism, more sophisticated in its approach, that harnesses the power of the marketplace in the service of the environment. Let me give you some examples.

The 1990 Clean Air Act, which I proposed and signed into law, is the most ambitious air pollution legislation anywhere on Earth. It will cut acid rain, smog, toxic chemical emissions. And yet it will do so with innovations the whole world is watching. We have a trading system for sulfur dioxide reductions, have a new generation of cleaner fuels and cleaner cars, a massive—and to date successful—voluntary air toxics reduction program.

Our national parks are under stress from millions of visitors. And so, just in the last 4 years, we've added over a million and half acres to America's parks, forests, wildlife refuges, and to other public land. We've created 57 new wildlife refuges and restored or protected more than a half a million acres a year of important wetlands. And at the same time, we've streamlined the permitting process so that projects which don't hurt wetlands aren't slowed down. And we've made sure to respect people's private property rights.

We've placed a moratorium on oil and gas drilling along the most environmentally sensitive areas of our coasts, signed new laws to protect against oilspills, to end

below-cost timber sales in America's largest rain forest, the Tongass, and to promote environmental education. We've backed our laws up with strict enforcement to make the polluters pay. And the results have been record contributions to cleanups from businesses.

And we have attended to the international environment with new agreements to stop the irresponsible export of toxic wastes, to ban trade in ivory and thereby stop the extinction of elephants due to poaching, and to use debt forgiveness to protect the environment through the debt-for-nature swaps.

In short, our country, America, retains its place at the forefront of international environmental accomplishment. Our laws have served as a model for environmental laws the world over. America's environmental accomplishments have not come by mistake; they are the result of sustained investment. Today, the United States spends about 2 percent of its gross domestic product, over $100 billion a year, on pollution control. In comparison to other nations, that's among the very, very highest in the world.

Americans have always believed that actions speak louder than words. And simple wisdom has guided our approach to the questions on the table at Rio. We will sign a good agreement on climate change. It is based on the idea that every nation should prepare an action strategy as we in the United States have done. We first laid our plan on the table in February 1991 with specific policy proposals and specific calculations concerning how much greenhouse gas emissions would be reduced. When the science on CFC's changed, we added new measures, and we again laid our plan on the table. We showed that our policies would reduce projected year 2000 greenhouse gas emissions by 125 million to 200 million tons, or by 7 to 11 percent. No other nation except The Netherlands has laid out such a specific plan of action. And that's why we insisted that the focus be on results, not on rhetoric. It may not have been widely reported in the press, but in area after area, the United States laid down specific proposals and worked for their adoption: Forests, oceans, living marine resources, public participation, financing. Let me be clear: Our commitment to action did not begin and will not end with Rio.

So, when I travel down there next week, to Brazil, I will bring with me several proposals to extend the commitment of the world community into the future. Let me outline for you my four-point plan of cooperation:

First, I will propose a major new initiative to protect and enhance the world's forests. I mentioned lessons learned about cost effectiveness. Well, halting the loss of the Earth's forests is one of the most cost-effective steps that we can take to cut carbon dioxide emissions. Forests also filter the air and water. They provide products from timber and fuelwood to pharmaceuticals and foodstuffs. They are home to more than half the world's species. At the Houston G–7 summit 2 years ago, I proposed a global forest convention. At UNCED, we should get agreement on the principles leading up to that. But I propose today to move ahead faster. At Rio, I will ask the other industrialized countries to join me in doubling worldwide forest assistance with a goal of halting the loss of the world's forests by the end of the decade. As a down payment, the U.S. will increase its bilateral forest assistance by $150 million next year. The plan is to encourage partnerships between recipient countries who could propose new projects and investor countries who, in effect, could bid to support the most effective proposals for sequestering CO_2 or preserving biodiversity.

Second, with respect to climate, the signing of a convention that calls for action plans is simply a first step. We must implement them. So I will join in proposing a prompt start to adoption of climate action plans. Of course, as new and better science becomes available on climate change, we will adjust that action plan accordingly. The solution to climate change must include the developing countries. While today they account for about a quarter of the world's emissions, by the year 2025 they will contribute over half. So we must have their participation, and we will fund country studies to get them started. These countries will need new technologies if they are to

enjoy green growth. And America can provide them. So, my budget includes an investment of almost $1 billion in developing new energy-efficient technologies. Hundreds of American businessmen will be traveling to Rio to make the case for our technology. But this effort must continue.

So then the third part of our plan is to support a program, a board program of technology cooperation. In particular, we're going to create a Technology Cooperation Corps to identify the green technology, those green technological needs of countries around the world, and then to knock down the barriers to making it available.

The fourth point of my program for a cleaner future is a continued program of research and understanding. This year we are requesting over $1.4 billion for the Global Change Research Program. That's more than the amount spent on climate research by the rest of the world put together. With Dan Goldin's leadership here at NASA, we will push for a program that provides results faster, cheaper, and better. At Rio, I will propose to make the data from our climate change program available and affordable for scientists and researchers all around the world. As part of this effort, we will distribute at that Conference, at UNCED, thousands of copies of computer disks with data on greenhouse effects, and we will open this year a Global Change Research Information Office.

These four steps—a dramatic program to protect and to enhance forests; quick action on climate change; cooperation in deploying cleaner, more efficient technology; and then an ongoing program to develop and share sound science—can help us seize that opportunity long after those speeches in Rio have been given and the Conference is over.

Two decades ago, when they gathered at Stockholm, the leaders of the world could not possibly have foreseen the tumultuous events of the intervening two decades. Then they worried about nuclear war as a chief environmental threat. They couldn't have known that today the specter of nuclear war, with its unthinkable destruction, would be calmed as never before in our postwar history. They could not possibly have envisioned that, with the fall of statism and communism, those who would come to Rio would have the chance to launch a new generation of clean growth guided by the wisdom of free peoples and fueled by the power of free markets. They could never have known how far we've have come in 20 years. Now it is for us to imagine how much further we can go. And what better place to make that point than standing before these people that are dedicated to demonstrating to the rest of the world how much farther we can go.

I am grateful to each and every one of you who gives of himself or herself to further the science and thus to improve and keep something very, very special, the environmental quality of our entire world. Thank you for what you do. And may God bless our great country. Thank you.

Note: The President spoke at 2:44 p.m. in the auditorium in Building 8. In his remarks, he referred to John M. Klineberg, Director, Goddard Space Flight Center; Brian D. Dailey, Executive Secretary-Designate, National Space Council; and Lennard A. Fisk, Associate Administrator for Space Science and Applications, NASA.